

Key Players in the Layoff Process

One of the action plans that may be identified through the workforce planning process is the need to lay off employees. Effective redeployment of the workforce is most successfully accomplished by combining the involvement of human resource staff, managers, Labor Relations Division, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) staff, and bargaining unit representatives. The involvement of these key players with early planning, good communications and addressing employee transition concerns will lead to effective redeployment efforts. Below is a summary of the key players and their role in the layoff and redeployment processes.

Human Resource and Management Staff

Human Resource (HR) and management are most effective when they work together at the very onset of layoff discussions. Together the HR and management staff can analyze the cause and effect of redeployment strategies to ensure that these strategies meet both their human resource and strategic business needs. In the case of reductions in the workforce, the HR staff can also provide managers with employee and position information as well as coordinate resources to assist employees with transition issues. Typically the HR staff acts as the agency's liaison with the MMB staff and the bargaining unit representatives during the process.

Agencies may want to consider assigning a HR staff member to act as the agency's Layoff Coordinator to work closely with management, bargaining units and employees to address issues on a daily basis. Inherent in their role is the ability to solve problems by researching solutions through a variety of sources. They dispense a great deal of information to managers and employees on job opportunities and layoff rights and options. Additionally, they may act as the agency's liaison with MMB, Staffing representatives, and Labor Relations staff.

Agencies may want to consider assigning a staff person to act as the Layoff Coordinator in the following situations:

- anticipation of a large number of layoffs at one work location or across many work locations at one agency (i.e. an agency with district office locations where employees are affected by layoff at several of the district office locations);
- anticipation of a high demand of HR assistance from employees;
- when other concurrent work activity affects HR's ability to provide one-on-one layoff assistance.

Examples of the Layoff Coordinator's responsibilities:

- assist employees with accessing information about state jobs and jobs in the private sector;
- assist employees with resume and interview preparation;
- coordinate the Employee Assistance Program's involvement as needed;
- coordinate scheduling the services of the local Minnesota Workforce Center;
- arrange and coordinate training for employees in such topics as Stress Management, Dealing with Transition in the Workplace, Retirement Planning;
- meet individually with employees to review layoff options and rights, and assisting employees with the claiming process;
- establish an on-site Employee Job Information Center

MMB HR Management and Labor Relations Representatives

MMB HR Management and Labor Relations divisions provide a variety of consultation and assistance services to HR and management staff.

The HR Management Division provides services in the areas of statewide redeployment, workforce planning, staffing strategies, and layoff assistance.

The Labor Relations Division provides services in the areas of contract negotiation and administration, including voluntary and involuntary layoff rights and options.

The State Employee Assistance Program

The State of Minnesota Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has been in place as a statewide resource since 1978. Staff members have worked with hundreds of state employees and most state agencies regarding the many aspects of change and transition. Contact with the EAP is confidential and there is no cost. Call (651) 259-3840 or 800-657-3719 for more information or assistance.

For Employees

- Individual counseling around personal, family or workplace issues
- Referrals to appropriate resources such as career counselors, financial counselors job-seeking support groups, etc.
- Counseling for employees and family members around personal or workplace issues.
- Literature and other helpful reading material.

For Managers

- Coaching and consultation in anticipation of a workplace transition.
This may include discussion relevant to managing the emotional aspects, strategizing timing of information, sharing and predicting a range of reactions, and other considerations in preparing to deal with a work unit in transition.
- Individual counseling regarding the manager's personal reaction to the changes.
- Predicting and discussing barriers to the change process.
- Suggested reading material around managing transition.
- Discussing training options for management teams as well as employee groups.
- Consultation around specific employee concerns.

For Human Resource Offices

- Consultation regarding the agency-wide effort at managing transition, including possible stages of training and use of resources.
- Consultation around specific management or employee concerns. Information about what efforts have been successful in other state agencies.

Bargaining Unit/Union Representatives

The union representative role in layoff and redeployment is to represent the interests of the members of the bargaining unit so that career development opportunities within state service are promoted, and all rights and options are available at layoff as described in the collective bargaining agreements. Additional layoff rights and benefits may be negotiated with the specific appointing authorities, subject to approval by the MMB Labor Relations Division and the bargaining unit executive boards.

Local officers, stewards and the assigned business agent may assist member employees. Duties may include, but are not limited to:

- assisting employees by identifying job opportunities for which they may qualify;
- interpreting the contract as it relates to layoff rights;
- negotiating layoff rights or benefits with agency management that do not exist in the contract;
- negotiating voluntary layoff benefits with agency management; and
- referring employees to resource people within and outside of the union to assist employees with transition issues.

Conclusion

A major barrier to smooth transition is scattered forces. Identifying the roles and functions of each of the key players in redeployment should be done early in the planning process. It can facilitate attainment of shared goals, while promoting joint problem solving and increased communications.